Environmental Issues Committee
Meeting Minutes
June 6, 2002

Introductions

Two new members of the committee were introduced: David Wolfe from DHMH and Andrew Sawyers, Community Planning and Environmental Justice Coordinator, MDE

Review of minutes

The committee briefly reviewed the minutes of the last meeting, May 30th and revisions to the draft outline. We revisited our discussion regarding the importance of defining the term "environment" as it pertains to our chapter and the need to refer to other chapters that cover important aspects of the environment that play a role in cancer etiology, such as second hand smoke and diet and nutrition. "Environment" can include everything that's not genetic. Although cancer is a genetic disease, environmental factors play a role in almost all cancers. The suggestion was made to begin the chapter with a presentation of the mechanism by which cancers develop, pointing out that it is a multi-stage process and that environmental factors can play a role at each step. We need to be upfront about what is known and not known about the cancer risk posed by environmental chemicals and communicate this well to citizens. It is also important that citizens are involved in the decisions that are made regarding the control of environmental chemicals. Educational programs will be very important. There are existing programs through county health departments. Perhaps one of our recommendations should be enhancing these programs. It's important to involve a knowledgeable public.

Environmental databases

Chris Loffredo provided a list for the group of the data sources he referred to at our May 30th meeting. An assessment of their limitations was also included.

Phil Heard provided a table with an initial listing of MDE/TARSA databases that primarily involve chemical use information for the state. These include Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) data, Employee Right to Know (RTK) data, effluent toxicity testing, and core water monitoring data. He made the suggestion that we want to do more than just list databases – rather we want to identify data needs and determine the extent to which these data needs are being met in part or in whole. Dr. Heard then introduced guests from MDE who presented information on monitoring and databases available in their sections.

George Harman briefly described toxic substance databases available from different programs. The Community Right to Know database is not computerized. It contains an inventory of chemicals used by industries in the state. Reporting is required for storage of 10,000 lbs or more. Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) database reports amounts of chemicals released of 25,000 lbs or more. There are 2500-3500 industries that report information for these databases. Data from the MD Occupational Safety and Health Worker Right to Know database goes back to the 1980s. Under this program, 11,000 companies report information on the types of chemicals their workers come into contact with; many of smaller companies, however, do not report. This database just lists

the names of chemicals; no quantities are provided. This makes this database less useful for assessing potential exposures. It is used for the purposes of emergency planning and training. The question was raised as to whether it's possible to find out when and where occupational exposure limits have been exceeded. Could one calculate the percentage of workers in MD that work in places with exposure to carcinogens using SIC codes? Other TARSA databases include stormwater runoff permits and ambient water monitoring. All of these could be made more useable in the future if they could be tied to exposure.

A consolidation of these databases is in its initial stages. MDE is developing an Enterprise Environmental Management System that will unified the data collection and handling which will allow the state to be more proactive in identifying non-compliance issues, establishing trends, and mapping the data. They are now conducting data readiness assessment and establishing priorities for moving old data into the system. This will be at least a 3-4 year program and funding is piecemeal. Support for this database from our committee could be helpful in maintaining the funding needed to completely merge the many different sources of environmental data for the state. QA/QC for environmental data is critical for building the database. Eventually air and water ambient data will be moved into the system.

Jay Prager presented information on drinking water and groundwater testing in MD. MDE has a database listing all drinking water wells installed since 1972 (although they're about 2 years behind in updating the database). There are about 400,000 wells in MD, many of which are private homeowner wells. Every new well drilled is sampled for bacteria and nitrates (required since the 1970s) and sampling is required when a house is sold; however this is the only water quality information available and it is held in county health departments where it is not readily available. There is no required testing for toxic chemicals. There have been a few specific studies done at the County level, such as the radon testing program conducted in private wells in Anne Arundel County. MDE is in the process of identifying which areas of Maryland have arsenic (As) at concentrations above the new MCL of 10 ppb. New wells will have to be tested for As.

Two other good sources of toxics data for groundwater are the MD Geological Society (MDGS) and the USGS. For example, the USGS has a study on pesticides in one of the Baltimore County watersheds. This type of information needs to be made more readily available. With such data, it might be possible to do "vulnerability mapping" which can be used to guide growth and development of our communities.

Recommendations voiced by the committee included: 1) MDE would be well served by better groundwater monitoring and protection: 2) Homeowners of individual private wells need to know that they have to manage their own water; thus there needs to be a good education system which involves knowing how to get one's well tested, finding out what chemicals one's well should be tested for, and how to implement pollution control measures.

Nancy Reilman provided information on Maryland's public water systems. There are about 3700 public water systems in the state, of which about 500 are community systems and 500 that serve organizations such as schools, businesses, churches, and gas stations. These are tested for 83 regulated contaminants and for bacteria, nitrites and nitrates. There is a drinking water Oracle database that contains radon concentrations to 1995 and some As data. Violation reports and compliance data can be found on EPA's

website: epa/gov/ogwdw. EPA is working to make data more available. The top common contaminants in drinking water in MD are bacteria, nitrates (in unconfined aquifers west of I95); and BTEX (volatile organics from fuel) found near underground storage tanks. MDE also has a source water assessment program that can provide some data. Since there is more extensive data collected on public drinking water systems, it was suggested that this information could provide clues as to what chemicals to test for in private wells.

A request was made to include a speaker from Maryland Occupational Safety and Health at a future meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm with the request that everyone fill out their meeting evaluation form.